

BUILDING FOR PEACE

**AN INTERNATIONAL ENCOUNTER FOR EUROPEAN JOURNALISTS
ON THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE—LISBON, 16-17 SEPTEMBER 1992**

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Department of Public Information (DPI), in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal and the Lisbon newspaper *Pública*, sponsored an International Encounter for European Journalists on the Question of Palestine at Lisbon, Portugal, from 16 to 17 September 1992. The Encounter was moderated by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Vienna, Giorgio Giacomelli, and coordinated by Mustapha Tili, Chief of the Anti-Apartheid, Decolonization and Palestine Programmes Section of DPI. It was opened by Duarte Ivo Cruz, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of Portugal.

The Encounter was part of DPI's special information programme on the question of Palestine, mandated by General Assembly resolution 46/74 C of 11 December 1992. The programme includes national, regional and international journalists' encounters and stems from the Assembly's conviction that the world-wide dissemination of accurate and comprehensive information on the question of Palestine remains of vital importance in heightening awareness of and support for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of an independent, sovereign State.

Each Encounter brings prominent media representatives from a specific country or region together with Israeli, Palestinian and other Middle East experts to engage in free, fair and frank discussions, in order to further the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and to contribute to a peaceful solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The structure of the Encounters is informal, with each panellist giving brief opening remarks, followed by a dialogue with the media representatives.

The Lisbon meeting was designed to build on the success of a similar UN-sponsored Encounter convened in Helsinki in June 1991. (DPI's publication *Prospects For Peace in the Middle East: An Israeli-Palestinian Dialogue* (Sales No. E.92.I.25), provides an account of the proceedings.) The objective in Lisbon was to review progress achieved in the current peace process, launched on 30 October 1991 in Madrid, discuss various scenarios for peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and focus on Europe's contribution to such an outcome.

PARTICIPANTS

Panellists

There were nine panellists: Jamil Hilal, Director of the Information Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and Member of the Palestine National Council (PNC); Hisham Mustapha, Department of Arab and International Affairs of the PLO and Member of the PNC; Ziad Abu Zayyad, Adviser to the Palestinian Negotiating Team; Avraham Burg, Member of the Knesset, Israel; Naomi Chazan, Member of the Knesset, Israel; Walid Al-Sa'adi, Personal Representative of H.R.H. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan; Hans Stercken, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Bundestag, Germany; Francisco Henriques da Silva, Director for Middle East and Maghreb Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Portugal; and William B. Quandt, Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C.

Media

The Encounter brought together a total of fifty-two media participants, including columnists, senior editors and editorial writers representing the following news organizations: *Der Standard*, ORF



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(Austria); *De Standaard*, IPS (Belgium); *Politiken*, *Weekendavisen* (Denmark); *Helsingin Sanomat*, *Hufvudstadsbladet* (Finland); *Agence France Presse* (AFP), *Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *Le Nouvel Observateur* (France); *Deutschlandfunk*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Vereinte Nationen* (Germany); *Kathimerini*, MEGA Channel TV (Greece); *Osservatore Romano* (Holy See); *The Irish Times* (Ireland); *Davar*, *Hadashot*, *Maariv*, *Jerusalem Post*, *Yediot Aharanot* (Israel); *Famiglia Cristiana*, *Il Giornale*, *La Stampa* (Italy); *Al Fajr*, *Al Quds*, *Al-Sha'ab*, *An-Nahar*, Arab Media Center (AMC), Jerusalem Media and Communications Centre (JMCC) (Jerusalem); *Luxemburger Wort* (Luxembourg); ANP (Algemeen Nederlands Persbureau), *De Volkskrant*, *NRC Handelsblad* (The Netherlands); *Aftenposten* (Norway); *CMR*, *Diario de Noticias*, *Jornal de Noticias*, *O Jornal*, *Público*, *TSF* (Portugal); *El Mundo* (Spain); *Svenska Dagbladet* (Sweden); *La Liberté*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Switzerland); *The European*, *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Independent* (United Kingdom).

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

The Encounter generated a wide-ranging and candid discussion on the peace process initiated in Madrid and continued in Washington, D.C., during the course of the Encounter.

A number of issues of particular importance were recognized, and there emerged significant points of agreement among the participants. The fact that this meeting took place under United Nations auspices and at this moment in the Middle East peace process was considered by all to be of singular value and usefulness. It was agreed by the participants that the occasion offered the potential for a parallel track, though an informal one, for the parties to meet and test their ideas on difficult subjects.

Three issues were repeatedly advanced during the discussions, namely, the welcoming of Europe as a significant player, economically and politically, in the ongoing peace process; the renewed recognition of the United Nations role in construc-

tive peace-building; and the importance of the consensus of the international community as the ultimate legitimate framework for a successful outcome to the negotiations and the positive evolution of dialogue between the parties to the conflict.

One panellist, a Member of the Israeli Knesset, noted that one of the most important indications of change in the region was the growing convergence between Israel and its neighbours in their visions of the future. This had been made possible, in part, by the fact that on 22 June 1992 Israel fully recognized UN Security Council resolution 242 (1967) and closed for good the option of its continued sovereignty over the occupied territories.

The participants unanimously agreed on the right of the Palestinians to define themselves as a people, not a national minority. They agreed also that significant recent changes in atmosphere, style and—to an untested degree—substance had the potential for fuelling real progress in the peace process. But, in the participants' view, the ability of all parties to seize the moment and take advantage of the current climate may determine whether there is success soon, or, in the long run, stalemate. Time is of the essence, participants said, if a new era is to prevail in the Middle East.

SUMMARY OF SPEAKERS

Duarte Ivo Cruz, in his opening statement, said that the theme of the meeting was one to which Portugal was deeply committed. The Portuguese Government reaffirmed its commitment to Security Council resolution 242, welcomed the Israeli Government's more positive attitude in the negotiations and appealed to all parties to undertake substantive measures.

Giorgio Giacomelli, in his comments outlining a United Nations perspective, reminded the participants that it was a UN resolution which legally paved the way for the creation of the State of Israel and that it was another UN resolution which gave international recognition to the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people. He asserted that Europe was part and parcel, histori-

cally and politically, of the Middle East scene, and said he believed that its input was especially needed at a time when the old bipolarity was waning. "A renewed UN of the post-cold-war era can also, and must, play a role", he said.

Mustapha Tlili spoke on behalf of DPI. He emphasized that the Encounter was intended neither as a negotiating mechanism, a conference nor any other forum defined by formal statements and final resolutions. It was a gathering of men and women engaged in an informal and open exchange on ways to build peace in the Middle East.

William B. Quandt, Senior Fellow, Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C. offered the observation that for the first time both sides had agreed to accept a common set of procedural arrangements; Palestinians were represented in negotiations on their own behalf; and Palestinians accepted that there was no guarantee on the final result of the process. He observed that there was a common interest and strong incentive for all sides to move quickly towards agreement. He hoped that disagreement on the details of the Palestinian self-governing interim arrangement would not be a cause of lost time. "In reference to the apparent deadlock now in the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations on an interim arrangement", he said, "both sides should at least agree on some principles. Some simple joint statement, some slight changes of words, could begin to give the impression that things are moving, and this would, in fact, keep things moving."

Jamil Hilal, Director of the Information Department of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), said there were some basic questions that could not be avoided. Most particularly, while there could be stages to a solution regarding Jerusalem, East Jerusalem must be recognized as the capital of a Palestinian State. Jerusalem could be the capital for two states, and these details could be worked out at a later date. Sovereignty over the land in the interim period was another prerequisite for an agreement, as was the right of the interim self-governing authority to legislate.

Avraham Burg, Member of the Israeli Knesset, wished first and foremost to assure the participants of the total commitment of the Labour Party to Security Council resolution 242 and its applicability to all occupied territories. But he stressed that if one put Jerusalem first on the negotiating agenda, the other easier issues might never be solved. He went on to say that the new Government in Israel had been elected in a narrow victory, and this mandate was for an interim solution. His advice to Palestinians was, therefore, to take advantage of the Labour Party's four-year-mandate. He added that he must compromise with his dreams, and perhaps Palestinians must compromise as well with theirs. He affirmed that he was ready to suffer this pain for the sake of peace.

Francisco Henriques da Silva, Director for Middle East and Maghreb Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal, observed that a breakthrough in one negotiating track could induce movement in all tracks. The key was to engage and take small steps. The European Communities (EC) and Portugal were committed to this peace process, to which there was no viable alternative. He added that the role of the EC was increasing incrementally and that the EC insisted on both economic and political involvement. He said that one often heard that the EC speaks with many different voices, but he assured the audience that on this issue the EC has a single voice.

In discussions of what the future can hold, **Walid Al-Sa'adi**, Personal Representative of H.R.H. Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan, started off by saying: "We shouldn't be hasty in passing judgement on all the proposals and counter-proposals revealed by the different negotiating teams to the press." He affirmed that in Jordan people believed there was real change in Israel. They were not sure of the depth and nature of the change, but would give it the benefit of the doubt. He believed that the peoples of the region needed to be part of the peace process. "We must develop a culture for peace", he said. "This will give the peace process depth." Finally, he felt certain that the International Covenant on Civil and

Political Rights, which had been ratified last year by Israel, was an instrument that could contribute significantly to the peace process. In his view, "Its implications for the protection of human rights in the occupied territories could be far-reaching."

Hisham Mustapha, of the PLO Arab and International Affairs Department and member of the PNC, said that in 1988 the Palestine National Council defined its vision of the future, and there was room for Israelis in it. "Our vision is based on reciprocity, mutual exchange, as well as legality." He said that many told the Palestinians not to put excessive hope in the peace process, but that they should not put a damper on peace. He went on to say: "We do want to create a Middle East that is different from this one. There must be interdependence. But to reach that goal, we need to proceed through independence. Then we can extend our hand to our neighbours."

Naomi Chazan, Member of the Israeli Knesset, said that the new Israeli Government's absolute commitment to peace in the region could not be exaggerated. The status quo was recognized as untenable. Peace, not war, was now being equated with security. She said that political treaties were required for the future, but that the Israeli vision was also socio-economic. Israel was striving to become part of the region in cultural terms. She said, however, that there were two major constraints: time and national will. She hoped the latter would not fade before the former was gone.

Hans Stercken, Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the German Bundestag, addressed the theme of Europe's contribution to the peace process. He said that the acceptance of the

principles of the Helsinki Final Act had provided the key for the great changes in Europe, and had shown that it was not possible to solve problems without acceptance of the principles of democracy and respect for human rights. He believed that there were also possibilities that could be put to use within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in the Mediterranean (CSCM), which could address the security of all countries of the area, as well as questions such as nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and democracy and human rights.

Ziad Abu Zayyad, adviser to the Palestinian Negotiating Team to the peace talks, said that he did not underestimate the changes in Israel. But he felt that the confidence-building measures taken by Israel had been seen in an exaggerated perspective. The Israeli Government should also understand that the solution to the interim period had to be a political solution, not an administrative one. He stated also that the discussion on the future of Jerusalem should not be postponed.

Mr. Burg, in later comments, stated that Europe should develop serious funding for both the Palestinian and the Israeli economies. In his opinion, this would truly help create a new Middle East.

The Moderator, **Mr. Giacomelli**, closed the Encounter, noting that it was the sentiment of a number of the participants that the initiative of this International Encounter on the Question of Palestine, initiated by DPI in Helsinki last year, should be pursued at an appropriate future date in Jerusalem, and that it could offer an innovative way for the UN to contribute to the peace process.